



MAGIC VALLEY

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA, & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

As shown in Magic Valley Table 1, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Magic Valley Labor Market Area for February 2001 was 4.0 percent. That rate is one-tenth of a percentage point lower than January 2001, and five-tenths of a percentage point lower than February 2000.

Many sectors showed a drop-off from January to February, as post holiday reductions in force took effect. *Manufacturing, Transportation, Communications, & Public Utilities, and Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate* all dropped in February, reflecting some of the slowing of the local economy, especially in agriculture. *Retail Trade* was down 5.7 percent from February 2000 as employers were more cautious in hiring and post holiday reductions in force were larger than last year. However, *Services, and Government Administration* were up from last year. A major restaurant opened in Twin Falls in February, which increased food service employment. The local economy is showing signs of slowing, although unemployment remains very low. Agriculturally related businesses are having some difficulties and agricultural commodities prices remain extremely low, making the overall outlook uncertain.

SPECIAL TOPIC: 2000 CENSUS INFORMATION

The new 2000 Census information has been released for Idaho counties and cities. Idaho's South Central region shows a widely varied population change over the last ten years. Blaine and Camas counties showed the highest percentage population increases in South Central Idaho, with 40.1 percent and 36.3 percent respectively. Most of Blaine County's growth was in the central part of the county, in the cities of Bellevue and Hailey where growth was 47.1 percent and 73.4 percent respectively. Camas County's growth occurred rurally, as the city of Fairfield only grew by 6.5 percent. Areas of low growth were

Magic Valley Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Twin Falls, Jerome, and Gooding counties

	Feb 2001*	Jan 2001	Feb 2000	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	47,490	47,180	48,790	0.7	-2.7
Unemployment	1,890	1,930	2,190	-2.1	-13.7
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.0	4.1	4.5		
Total Employment	45,600	45,250	46,600	0.8	-2.1
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	45,610	45,420	46,910	0.4	-2.8
Unemployment	2,400	2,410	2,700	-0.4	-11.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	5.3	5.3	5.8		
Total Employment	43,210	43,010	44,210	0.5	-2.3
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**					
Goods-Producing Industries	6,600	6,880	6,670	-4.1	-1.0
Mining & Construction	1,740	1,750	1,760	-0.6	-1.1
Manufacturing	4,860	5,130	4,910	-5.3	-1.0
Durable Goods	760	770	850	-1.3	-10.6
Nondurable Goods	4,100	4,360	4,060	-6.0	1.0
Food Processing	3,100	3,350	3,050	-7.5	1.6
All Other Nondurable Goods	1,000	1,010	1,010	-1.0	-1.0
Service-Producing Industries	29,240	28,870	29,250	1.3	0.0
Transportation, Comm., & Utilities	2,980	3,000	2,860	-0.7	4.2
Wholesale Trade	2,270	2,260	2,270	0.4	0.0
Retail Trade	7,450	7,420	7,900	0.4	-5.7
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,320	1,330	1,360	-0.8	-2.9
Services	8,170	8,140	7,840	0.4	4.2
Government Administration	3,700	3,680	3,370	0.5	9.8
Government Education	3,350	3,040	3,650	10.2	-8.2

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

primarily restricted to Cassia and Minidoka Counties. Cassia County increased a very modest 9.6 percent in the last decade and Minidoka County growth was less than half of that figure at 4.2 percent. Out-migration due to job seeking was the primary reason that growth stayed relatively flat in the Mini-Cassia region. High unemployment and a stronger dependence on agriculture kept the local economies in Mini-Cassia very flat. Recent efforts at diversification and attracting new employers should help the situation there. The western Magic Valley, spurred by economic diversification and the spurt of the dairy industry, showed strong growth. Twin Falls, Gooding, Jerome, and Lincoln counties all had growth of over 20 percent. The city of Twin Falls grew from a population of 27,634 persons in 1990 to 34,469 persons in 2000, a growth of 24.7 percent. Overall, with the exception of the extremely rapid growth of Ada and Canyon counties, South Central Idaho's population growth was very similar to that in the other areas of the state, reflecting the strong growth that Idaho showed over the past decade.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Twin Falls County

- Rent-A-Center, Inc. will be opening a new Twin Falls store in May 2001. Headquartered in Plano, Texas, Rent-A-Center has 2,100 stores nationwide, and hopes to expand to 4,000 stores by 2005. It offers durable goods such as electronics, appliances, computers, furniture, and accessories, with flexible rental-purchase agreements that allow customers to own merchandise at the end of an agreed-on rental period. Rent-A-Center will start with five full-time employees.
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has obtained a \$257,376 building permit to construct a new Veterans Clinic, which will replace its leased location on Shoup Avenue West. The new 4,200-square-foot clinic will be on Urban Renewal Agency-owned property at 260 Second Avenue East, the former site of Matt's Mini-Mart. The VA is requiring contractors to complete construction by October 1, 2001.
- The United Way of South Central Idaho has named James F. Ponzo as its new Executive Director. Mr. Ponzo replaces Diane Boyd, who resigned to pursue personal interests. Mr. Ponzo is a retired Navy Captain with 28 years of service. He flew helicopters, and worked for two years as a military attaché to Portugal. Ponzo is familiar with the United Way, having worked as the organization's campaign chairman for the past three years and as board president in 1999 and 2000. The United Way of Magic Valley helps support 22 local agencies such as Valley House, Salvation Army, Red Cross, Boys & Girls Club of Magic Valley, Southern Idaho Learning Center, Minidoka Senior Center, and the Walker Center.

Blaine, Camas, Gooding, Jerome, and Lincoln Counties

- Camas and Minidoka counties have been declared primary disaster areas by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Due to poor harvest conditions and drought, these counties suffered sufficient production loss in a single enterprise to warrant disaster designation. Blaine, Cassia, Elmore, Gooding, and Lincoln counties have been designated as "contiguous" disaster area. Family-sized farm operations in the primary and contiguous counties are eligible to be considered for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency.
- The Hailey City Council approved the final plat for the North Hailey Plaza, which will include an Albertson's supermarket and a few other buildings.

Construction will begin on the 7.5-acre site in June, with buildings ready to open seven to nine months later.

- The Ketchum City Council unanimously adopted a resolution that will keep the level of cars entering Ketchum in 2021 the same as it is in 2001. The resolution outlines some tools the Council can use, such as providing incentives for people to car pool and use public transportation, and creating disincentives for people to drive alone. The main problem for Ketchum is not tourist traffic, but commuter traffic entering the city from the south and causing a great deal of congestion on city streets.
- Two former Wells Fargo Bank Branches, one at the corner Sun Valley Road and East Avenue in Ketchum and one on North Main Street in Hailey, are now a part of Mountain West Bank. All Wells Fargo employees are now employees of Mountain West Bank. This change is a result of sales mandated by the merger of Wells Fargo and First Security Banks last September. Federal regulators from the Department of Justice made the merger conditional upon the sale of those two branches, among others throughout the region, to Mountain West. The branches closed for one afternoon to convert the Wells Fargo computer system to that of Mountain West.

Cassia and Minidoka Counties

- The Cassia County Planning and Zoning Commission unanimously voted to deny Big Sky Farms a permit to construct a 50,000-sow, farrow-to-finish hog operation. The facility would have been located at the old Simplot C & Y Dairy site on Yale Road, four miles east of the I-84 Cotterell Weigh Station near Raft River. It would have been within a mile of the Raft River LDS Church and park, and in the immediate neighborhood of over 100 Raft River residents.

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